



DNI Clapper Signs New Policy on Social Media for Federal Background Investigations for Security Clearances

NEWS RELEASE

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Director of National Intelligence James Clapper yesterday signed Security Executive Agent Directive Five, codifying federal background investigative authority to incorporate publicly-available social-media information in the security clearance process.

The new policy comes into effect after a long, deliberative process recognizing the ubiquity of social media and the importance of maintaining privacy and civil liberties. The policy does not require security investigations consider social media information. Instead, it permits the collection of publicly-available social-media information if an agency head determines it is an appropriate investigative tool.

“Social media has become an integral—and very public—part of the fabric of most American’s daily lives,” said Bill Evanina, Director of ODNI’s National Counterintelligence and Security Center. “We cannot afford to ignore this important open source in our effort to safeguard our secrets—and our nation’s security.”

This policy places important restrictions that limit the federal government’s reach into the private lives of clearance applicants and holders. Absent a national security concern, or criminal reporting requirement, information pertaining to individuals other than the individual being investigated—even information collected inadvertently—will not be pursued. In addition, investigators may not request—or require—individuals to provide social media passwords, log into a private account or take any action that would disclose non-publicly available social media information.

Security clearance holders undergo intense scrutiny before obtaining—and while maintaining—a clearance. This includes reporting interactions with foreign nationals, obtaining permission to travel abroad, and undergoing extensive background investigations and re-investigations.



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This is as it should be, Evanina said. These requirements, along with considering an applicant's public social media presence, "are a small price to pay to protect our nation's secrets and ensure the trust the American people have placed in us."

For more information, please see the following: [SEAD 5](#), Director Evanina's